



Parshas Shemos 2024, man in the arena

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers. May G-d return all the hostages and return them immediately..

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna and those who need to experience a speedy and complete recovery with G-d's help.

The Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and memories a blessing.

The release date of this episode corresponds with the Yahrzeit, the anniversary of the passing of the Alter Rebbe. As the founder of the Chabad movement, the Alter Rebbe introduced the idea of using our knowledge, intellect, and understanding, we can grow and increase our connection to our Father in heaven, despite the physicality of our world.

Our Parsha ends the origins of a family and begins the birth of a nation. The Torah starts by giving us context to the Jewish people's situation at that time. Yosef and all his brothers had passed on, and the new Pharaoh forgot Yosef and all his accomplishments.

As the Jewish people began to flourish and prosper, Pharaoh became fearful of their growing numbers and resolved to find a solution to his "Jewish problem." He enslaved the Jewish people and forced them to do hard work to break their minds, bodies, and spirits.

Meanwhile, Moshe Rabbeinu ventured out of the royal residences where he was raised and saw the enslaved Jewish nation. As Moshe roamed about, he witnessed an incident that would forever change his destiny.

Moshe saw an Egyptian slavemaster hitting and beating a Jew slave. He decided he could not stand by anymore as his brothers and sisters were suffering. Moshe said G-d's holy and secret 72-letter name, instantly killing the evil Egyptian.

The backlash came quickly; Pharaoh discovered what he did and wished to kill Moshe for his actions. But Moshe had already fled Egypt and escaped to the country of Midian to avoid Pharaoh's punishment.

However, a question comes to mind: At the beginning of the Parsha, the Torah names Ya'akov and his sons who came down to Egypt. The Pasuk writes that the total number was 70 but adds that Yosef was in Egypt then. Why does the Torah add a detail that is already known and obvious? If Ya'akov and his family were coming to Egypt, they would come at Yosef's request. What does the fact that Yosef was in Egypt at that time add to the narrative the Torah is teaching us?

The Chizkuni, Rav Chezekiah Ben Manoah gives a simple answer, he explains that the next Pasuk (1:6) tells us that Yosef and his brothers had passed on. Hence, the Torah reintroduces Yosef and where he was, as it does his father and his brothers.

However, Rashi, Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading Torah commentator, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He answers that the Torah adds the detail about Yosef to tell us that his holiness did not diminish despite his location. Although he was in Egypt, a country whose essence contradicts the very notion of Yosef beliefs. A place that is the embodiment of sin, impurity, and evil, did not influence Yosef in any way or detract from his holiness.

Rashi writes that Yosef, who was the apple of his father's eye, a shepherd who spent his time connecting to G-d, is the same Yosef who was viceroy of Egypt. Despite the honor and prestige bestowed upon him for saving the world from hunger, Yosef did not change or switch his beliefs. The holiness with which he left his father's home pales in comparison to the righteousness he exuded as a viceroy of Egypt.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, Rav Chaim Ben Attar takes Rashi's explanation a step further. He adds that Yosef's righteousness surpassed the holiness of all his brothers combined.

The simple fact that he was in Egypt and challenged in ways his brothers couldn't have imagined puts Yosef far ahead of his brothers spiritually. But the fact that he never sinned despite the multiple opportunities endowed him with a deep and lasting connection to G-d similar to his father, Ya'akov Avinu.

Rashi's and Ohr Hachaim's profound explanations are ever more relevant as we are demanded to defend our existence to the world. With the rise of open anti-semitism calling for our extermination, questioning the very notion of our existence.

We can not surrender nor back down from defending our nation and beliefs in spite of the hostility it creates. We must continue the unity we are experiencing today and trust in G-d to fulfill His promise with the ultimate redemption.

In our daily lives, it is imperative that we understand that it takes nothing to stand on the sidelines with the rest of the masses. But it takes real courage and determination to defend your beliefs and values to an ever-growing opposition. However, it is in those moments that your true self comes out, and your soul shines.

**"Even more than the strength to win,
we need the courage to try, the willingness to fail,
the readiness to learn, and the faith in G-d to persist."**

*Have a meaningful Shabbos!
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*